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THE SUI SENTENCE COMPLETION TESTS: RETEST RELIABILITY,

SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SCORE-FAKING AND RELATIONSHIP TO

OTHER MEASURES OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

by

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As the title of this report indicates, the essential purposes of the present study were to secure an estimate of the retest reliability of the multiple choice sentence completion tests which have been developed as part of ONR Project NR 151-075, to assess their susceptibility to deliberate simulation of behavioral maladjustment and to determine their relationship with two other more or less accepted measures of personal adjustment, namely the Shipley Personal Inventory (3, 5) and the Taylor Anxiety Scale (4). The basic validity of the multiple choice sentence completion tests can be assessed adequately only through a comparison with acceptable criteria of personal adjustment in the Naval Service. This will be accomplished by a comparison of the test performances of recruits with their status after a period of 18 months following enlistment has elapsed. Since this basic validation necessarily implies a waiting period of considerable length before the criterion data can be secured, it was felt that an experimental study such as herein described could offer valuable indications with respect to the promise of these newly developed tests.[1]

Procedure

One hundred male college students, enrolled in the introductory psychology course at the State University of Iowa, were given two series of tests with a two-week interval between testing sessions. The following tests were employed in the order presented:

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[1] Copies of Sentence Completion Forms A and B and the SUI revision of the Personal Inventory, Format C, will be found in Appendix A.

A. First testing session:

    1. SUI Sentence Completion Form Z (a free answer form).[2]

    2. Shipley Personal Inventory, Format C (SUI Revision).

    3. SUI Sentence Completion Form A (a multiple choice form empirically derived from a free answer form).

    4. Shay Multiple Choice Sentence Completion Test (2).[3]

B. Interim of two weeks: The Minnesota Vocational Interest Inventory (1) was to be filled out during this time.[4]

C. Second testing session:

    1. SUI Sentence Completion Form A (RETEST).

    2. SUI Sentence Completion Form B (a multiple choice form made up of the same items as in SUI Sentence Completion Form Z).

    3. Shipley Personal Inventory - (RETEST).

    4. SUI Sentence Completion Form A (with instructions to "choose the completions on this test which will make you appear to have a very good character and healthy personality").

    5. SUI Sentence Completion Form A (with instructions to "choose those completions on this test which will make you appear least desirable for the armed forces").

    6. Shipley Personal Inventory (with instructions to "answer each of the items with the worst possible choice").

D. Additional data were available on the Taylor Anxiety Scale which had been administered routinely to all students enrolled in the introductory psychology course.

[2,3,4]The subjects' performances of these tests will not be considered in the present report.

Scoring of the Sentence Completion Tests

As indicated in previous status reports, the sentence completion tests were developed on the basis of the responses of two discrete groups of subjects, one being designated as "normal," the other as "psychoneurotic." As criterion groups, these groups were admittedly inadequate and the data were viewed as providing a source of promising test items and typical test responses rather than as validating data. From this pool of items, 50 were selected to comprise two multiple choice forms, Form A and Form B. Three possible completions for each item were selected, each completion being considered representative of one of the two criterion groups. Of these 50 items, the 30 most promising were selected to make up Sentence Completion Form A. The additional 20 items were used to make up Forms B and Z, Form Z being a free answer form containing the same items as Form B. The responses to the 20 items used for Forms B and Z did not discriminate as well between the two criterion groups but the items did appear to possess sufficient promise to warrant trial.

Tentative scoring keys were developed on the basis of expectations derived from an inspection of the responses of the two groups. It is these tentative scoring keys which have been employed in the present study.

Results

Retest Reliability

The retest reliability of Sentence Completion Form A as estimated by the product moment correlation between scores on the initial test and the

retest twc weeks later, under standard conditions of administration, was found to be .772. (See Table 2.) The standard error of measurement was found to be 2.1. This estimate of reliability may be compared with that found for the Personal Inventory, under identical conditions of administration. With this test, the product moment correlation was found to be .775.

Susceptibility to Score-Faking

The means, standard deviations, and ranges of scores on the tests investigated in this study are presented in Table 1.

It will be noted that, under the "fake bad" condition of administration, mean score on Sentence Completion Form A shifted markedly in the direction of ill-health, the "fake bad" mean score being 2.6 standard deviations below the "standard" mean score. Thus it is evident that the test performance is quite susceptible to the influence of a deliberate set to appear maladjusted. However, that it is less susceptible to the influence of deliberate simulation than the Personal Inventory is suggested by the fact that the "fake bad" mean score in the latter test is 8.4 standard deviations from the "standard" mean score in the direction of ill-health.

On the other hand, performance on Sentence Completion Form A did not seem to be particularly susceptible to the effects of a deliberate set to appear as healthy as possible, the "fake good" mean score being only .8 standard deviations higher than the "standard" mean score.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges of Test Scores
(N = 100)

	Mean	S.D.	Range
Sentence Completion Form A	35.77	5.06	21-47
Sentence Completion Form B	18.70	3.81	8-26
Personal Inventory	3.18	1.88	0-7
Anxiety Scale	13.49	6.73	1-35
Sentence Completion Form A - "fake good"	39.66	3.89	29-48
Sentence Completion Form A - "fake bad"	27.74	4.24	14-33
Personal Inventory - "fake bad"	18.90	1.17	14-20

Relationship to Other Measures

stimates of the correlation between the Sentence Completion Tests and other measures of personal adjustment investigated in this study are presented in Table 2.

It will be noted that the correlations between Sentence Completion Form A and both the Personal Inventory and the Anxiety Scale are highly significant but of rather small magnitude. In contrast, Sentence Completion Form B does not correlate significantly with either the Personal Inventory or the Anxiety Scale and, indeed, not even with Sentence Completion Form A.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Sentence Completion Form A has satisfactory retest reliability, the estimate obtained in the present study being comparable to those usually found with personality inventories.

The initial decision to develop a test of the sentence completion type was based on the hope that such an instrument would be relatively insusceptible to the effects of deliberate simulation or dissimulation on the part of the subject. It is evident that this hope has been far from realized in the present preliminary forms of the sentence completion test. Performance on Sentence Completion Form A does appear to be significantly less susceptible to deliberate intent to simulate maladjustment than does the "grossly obvious" Personal Inventory. Nevertheless, it is clear that total performance on this Sentence Completion Test is quite significantly changed by such intent.

Table 2

Product Moment Correlations among Test Scores

	Sentence Completion Form A (I)*	Sentence Completion Form A(II)	Sentence Completion Form B	Personal Inventory (I)	Personal Inventory (II)	Anxiety Scale
Sentence Completion Form A (I)*	———	.7717**	.0304	.2823**	.2899**	.3135**
Sentence Completion Form A (II)		———	.0282	.3207**	.3920**	.4132**
Sentence Completion Form B			———	.1607	.1346	.1112
Personal Inventory (I)				———	.7752**	.2716**
Personal Inventory (II)					———	.3974**

*First and second administrations of a test are indicated by (I) and (II).

**Significant beyond the 1% level of confidence.

It is reasonable to expect that the individual items in the test will vary significantly with respect to this characteristic of susceptibility to "score-faking." An analysis of the individual items in this regard would therefore seem to be indicated and such an item analysis is planned after substantial criterion data have been received and a truly valid scoring key has been established.

The relative inability of the subjects in this study to "fake good" on Sentence Completion Form A is difficult to interpret at this time. This relative inability may be due to the subtlety of the items but, in the present stage of development of the test, it may well be a function of defects in the scoring key.

The positive and significant correlations of Sentence Completion Form A with the Personal Inventory and the Anxiety Scale support the assumption that this preliminary form of the test possesses potential validity and that it should be possible to develop an instrument of considerable practical utility when adequate criterion data become available. Conversely, the lack of correlation of Sentence Completion Form B with the Personal Inventory, the Anxiety Scale, and Sentence Completion Form A indicates that, either because of poor item selection or a defective scoring key, this test offers little hope for the development of a significant screening instrument. However, item analysis may yield a number of items which possess sufficient discriminatory ability to warrant their utilization in the final form of the Sentence Completion Test.

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APPENDIX A

Shipley Personal Inventory, Format C (SUI Revision)[5]

SUI Sentence Completion Form A[6]

SUI Sentence Completion Form B[6]

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[5]Four items of the original Format C have been altered to make the format of a consistently forced-choice type. "Correct" choices are marked on the test copy. A low score is considered indicative of good adjustment.

[6]These multiple choice forms were empirically derived from responses to a free answer sentence completion test administered to "normal" and "psychoneurotic" subjects. Score values tentatively assigned to each choice are marked on the test copies. A high score is considered indicative of good adjustment.

Name_____ Ser.No._____ Date_____

Age_____ Sex_____ Place_____ Company_____

In each question, mark (X) the answer which fits you best. Even
if neither answer fits you very well, mark the one that fits you
better than the other.

1 I graduated from high school (X)   1 I did not graduate from high
                                            school ( )

2 I was a sickly child ( )   2 I was an active child (X)

3 I have felt bad more from head   3 I have felt bad more from
   cold (X)   dizziness ( )

4 I seek excitement (X)   4 I avoid excitement ( )

5 I like to have people do things my   5 I like to have people figure things
   way (X)   out for me ( )

6 I am more nervous ( )   6 I am more easy going (X)

7 Somehow I never could find enough   7 My free time always seemed to be
   to do in my free time ( )   filled (X)

8 I wish I wouldn't feel so tired ( ) 8 I wish I could have a more re-
                                           sponsible job (X)

9 I wish I could have more   9 I wish I weren't bothered by
   excitement (X)   bad dreams ( )

10 I wish I didn't have so many aches 10 I wish I wouldn't keep changing
    and pains ( )   my mind (X)

11 I wish I weren't so nervous ( )   11 I wish I wouldn't keep putting
                                            things off (X)

12 I wish I could get myself to take   12 I wish worrying wouldn't make
    more chances (X)   me sick to my stomach ( )

13 I have more headaches than the   13 I do not have as many headaches
    average person ( )   as the average person (X)

14 The hours at night seem long ( )   14 The hours at night pass very
                                            quickly (X)

15 I like most any kind of food (X)   15 I have a poor appetite ( )

16 After exertion I feel hungry (X)   16 After exertion I feel dizzy ( )

17 When excited I feel weak ( )   17 When excited I feel stronger (X)

18 I think I might like to watch a   18 The sight of blood upsets me ( )
    surgical operation sometime (X)

19 My heart sometimes speeds up for no 19 I never notice my heart beating (X)
    reason at all ( )

20 I have never gone to a doctor for   20 I have occasionally gone to a
    headaches or dizzy spells (X)   doctor for headaches or dizzy
                                            spells ( )

Name_____ Ser.No._____ Date_____

Age_____ Sex_____ Place_____ Company_____

Below are some incomplete sentences, each with three possible endings. Read each sentence and the three endings carefully and check the ending which best describes how you feel or what you think. Even though no ending may exactly express your feeling or opinion, check the one that comes closer to expressing it than the other two. Check only one ending for each sentence.

1) I was happiest when
   ( ) I was at home with my family.
   ( ) I got a good job.
   ( ) I was not worried about my problems.

2) One must never
   ( ) trust other people too much.
   ( ) there is nothing one must "never" do.
   ( ) give up.

3) Mother was all right but
   ( ) I didn't appreciate her.
   ( ) she nagged a lot.
   ( ) she lacked understanding.

4) As a boy my greatest trouble
   ( ) was making friends.
   ( ) was feeling inferior to others.
   ( ) was shyness.

5) I feel like cursing when
   ( ) I think about the world situation and war.
   ( ) I can't get something I want.
   ( ) things go wrong.

6) When people are praised they
   ( ) work better.
   ( ) may get conceited.
   ( ) deserve it.

7) I used to daydream about
   ( ) being famous.
   ( ) flying an airplane.
   ( ) being an athlete.

8) I feel very close to people who
   ( ) understand me.
   ( ) have troubles.
   ( ) have similar interests.

9) She was happiest when he
   ( ) did what she wanted.
   ( ) made love to her.
   ( ) asked her to marry him.

10) People would do anything in order to
    ( ) protect themselves.
    ( ) make money.
    ( ) be happy.

11) The thing about a baby is
    ( ) its helplessness.
    ( ) how fast it grows.
    ( ) that you can make it become whatever you want.

12) When criticized for my behavior, I
    ( ) resent it.
    ( ) try to correct my errors.
    ( ) pay no attention.

13) What meant most to me was
    ( ) my achievements.
    ( ) being praised for things I did.
    ( ) making my parents happy.

14) I felt that Mom and Dad
    ( ) were good to me.
    ( ) were not happy together.
    ( ) were fine people.

15) Because of Mom, I

(C) am sometimes unhappy.
(/) am a better man.
(?) was born.

16) I used to feel bad about

(C) my family life.
(?) hurting people's feelings.
(/) my personality.

17) The thing I value most in my closest friend

(/) is a sense of humor.
(C) is understanding.
(,) is loyalty.

18) Boys have more fun than girls

(C) is an untrue statement.
(?) in outdoor play.
(/) because they are not as re-
       stricted.

19) I cannot control myself when

(/) I get angry.
(C) people pick on someone smaller.
(C) I want a woman.

20) The thought of an unborn baby

(/) is unpleasant to me.
(C) has no meaning to me.
(?) is interesting to me.

21) I feel like smashing things when

(C) things don't go my way.
( ) I am falsely accused.
(/) I never feel like smashing
       things.

22) When people make fun of me

( ) I laugh with them.
( ) I don't like it.
( ) I feel unhappy.

23) When I saw that others were doing better, I

(/) felt discouraged.
(C) quit.
(?) tried harder.

24) I sometimes hated father because

(/) he tried to run my life.
(2) he was too strict.
(0) I never hated him.

25) We tend to forget the type of ex-periences which

(/) are not important.
(C) we are ashamed of.
(?) are unhappy.

26) I like people at parties who

(/) treat me nicely.
(') are quiet.
(?) act natural.

27) She disliked him when he

(C) got too affectionate.
(?) was inconsiderate.
(/) criticized her and her par-
       ents.

28) What makes me angry is

(,) my own faults.
( ) being pushed around.
(,) reckless driving.

29) Most children are

(?) likable.
( ) spoiled.
(,) intelligent.

30) I am afraid

(/) there may be a depression.
(,) of tests like this.
(,) of what others think of me.

Name _____ Date_____

Age_____ Sex_____ Marital Status_____ Educational Status_____

Below are some incomplete sentences, each with three possible endings.
Read each sentence and the three endings carefully and check the ending
which best describes how you feel or what you think. Even though no
ending may exactly express your feeling or opinion, check the one that
comes closer to expressing it than the other two. . Check only one ending
for each sentence.

1) The thing a woman looks for in a
   man is
   (⁄) character.
   ( ) money.
   (⁄) love, protection and com-
         panionship.

2) I couldn't get along without
   (⁄) my family.
   ( ) someone to love me.
   (⁄) belief in myself.

3) Most women are
   (⁄) easily flattered.
   (⁄) so different I can't describe
         them as a group.
   (⁄) frustrated.

4) My idea of a mature adult is one
   who
   ( ) can think for himself.
   (⁄) is willing to accept respon-
         sibility.
   (⁄) acts his age.

5) Most of all I wanted to
   ( ) be accepted.
   ( ) get a good job.
   ( ) travel.

6) I failed when
   (⁄) I didn't work hard enough.
   ( ) I wanted most to succeed.
   ( ) I have never stopped trying,
         so I have never really
         failed.

7) Children should be punished
   (⁄) when they do not behave.
   ( ) seldom or never.
   ( ) when they do not obey their
         parents.

8) I dream of
   (⁄) Jeannie with the light brown
         hair.
   (⁄) success.
   (⁄) women.

9) I get distracted when
   (⁄) I think about my problems.
   (⁄) there is too much noise.
   (⁄) people watch me. _

10) I like children who are
   (⁄) cheerful.
   (⁄) well-behaved.
   (⁄) friendly.

11) I suffer most from
   (⁄) lack of money.
   ( ) my own faults.
   ( ) the weather.

12) The difference between Mom and Dad
    was
   ( ) their ideas about raising
         children.
   ( ) one was more domineering than
         the other.
   ( ) one was more understanding than
         the other.

13) Babies sometimes make me
   ( ) want to get married.
   ( ) irritated.
   ( ) feel helpless.

14) I would like the men under me to
   ( ) be happy.
   ( ) cooperate.
   ( ) think for themselves.

15) I despise
   ( ) no one that I can think of.
   ( ) loud, conceited people.
   ( ) two-faced people.

16) Girls are nicer than boys
   ( ) most of the time.
   ( ) is not true.
   ( ) sometimes.

17) My greatest fault
   ( ) is my temper.
   ( ) is trying too hard.
   ( ) is that I can't assume
        responsibility.

18) People get upset when
   ( ) they find out they aren't as
        important as they thought.
   ( ) I do something they don't like.
   ( ) things go wrong.

19) Most men are
   ( ) too different to be described
        as a group.
   ( ) friendly.
   ( ) not sincere with a woman.

20) I often wished
   ( ) I had more money.
   ( ) I was dead.
   ( ) I was famous.

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